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Sub-Commission on Prevention of
Discrimination and Protection
of Minorities
Working Group on Indigenous Populations
Ninth session
22 July-2 August 1991
Item 5 of the provisional agenda

REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENTS PERTAINING TO THE PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS OF INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS

Information received from Governments

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INTRODUCTION

1. By its resolution 1982/34 of 7 May 1982, the Economic and Social Council authorized the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities to establish annually a working group on indigenous populations to review developments pertaining to the promotion and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous populations, including information requested by the Secretary-General annually, and to give special attention to the evolution of standards concerning the rights of indigenous populations.

2. The Sub-Commission, in its resolution 1990/26, requested the Secretary-General to transmit the report of the Working Group to Governments. The Commission on Human Rights made the same request in its resolution 1991/59 of 6 March 1991. In accordance with these resolutions, appropriate communications were sent to Governments on 10 December 1990.

3. The present document contains replies received as of 31 May 1991 from Governments pertaining to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous populations. Further replies, if any, will be included in addenda to this document.

I. INFORMATION SUBMITTED BY GOVERNMENTS

A. Colombia

4. In Colombia, there is a great diversity of ethnic groups, resulting in an incomparably rich national heritage, both culturally and socially. There are at present 81 indigenous groups, comprising over half a million persons, who speak nearly 75 different languages and inhabit 25 per cent of Colombian territory.

5. While it is true that until very recently these communities did not receive the care and attention they needed from the State, the situation is being corrected gradually but effectively. Great concern is being shown by the central Government with a view to remedying situations of marginalization, and a number of measures have been adopted to recognize the inalienable rights of the indigenous peoples and assist them with specific policies.

6. The fundamental objective of the Colombian Government in recent years has been to take steps, design projects and support initiatives by the indigenous communities to strengthen the three-way relationship between the State, the indigenous peoples and society. All these activities have been carried out through the Ministry of the Interior's Division of Indigenous Affairs (DAI) by the Office of the President of the Republic, using the National Rehabilitation Plan of the National Planning Department (DNP), the National Agrarian Reform Institute (INCORA), the National Institute of Renewable Natural Resources and the Environment (INDERENA), the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, indigenous organizations and other bodies.

7. One of the serious problems which affected the indigenous inhabitants of the Amazon area of Colombia was the wanton destruction of natural resources. Accordingly, the Government introduced and applied in that area the system of national parks and indigenous reservations. The general purpose was to recognize the right of the indigenous communities to the territories traditionally occupied by them, to adopt programmes for the management, conservation, renewal and exploitation of natural resources, to upgrade the reservations by acquiring the developed land owned on them by third parties and allocating them free of charge to indigenous communities, granting lands to the indigenous communities which had none, and extending the reservations dating back to colonial times by acquiring more land.

8. The reservations, whether those of colonial origin or those set up by the National Agrarian Reform Institute (INCORA), are as follows:

Type of reservation	No.	Total hectares	Persons protected
Colonial	81	399 688	156 680
Established by INCORA 1967-86	158	12 380 780	127 697
Established by INCORA 1986-89	63	13 360 641	27 397
Total	302	26 141 109	311 774

9. The legislation on reservations consists basically of Act No. 135 of 1961, Act No. 31 of 1967 approving the ILO Convention concluded in Geneva in 1957 and the New Agrarian Reform, whereby INCORA itself can set up indigenous reservations.

10. It is important to stress that the above and other legislative measures adopted under the same policy are not intended to divide the population along any racial lines, to prohibit contacts with other racial groups or to restrict the right to freedom of movement or residence. Rather, the purpose is to preserve the cultural heritage by arranging festivities and sports events, and by promoting the use of the language and other traditions of each particular tribe.

11. Moreover, in keeping with the Government's purpose the indigenous communities are guaranteed the right to use the renewable natural resources on their lands and, with the common consent of the various communities, steps have been taken to ensure the monitoring, renewal and sustainable use of those resources. To that end, on the basis of Resolution No. 0997 of 19 September 1987 indigenous inspectors of the natural resources of the reservations were appointed.

12. The Government's steps, far from preventing the racial groups from taking part in the country's political, social, economic and cultural life, and far from creating conditions which might prevent the advancement of those groups, afford them the necessary conditions to organize themselves in accordance with their own usages and customs (Act No. 89 of 1890, annex) and to strengthen indigenous participation in decision-making on policies and programmes affecting them, by creating a series of mechanisms with indigenous participation, such as the Municipal Rehabilitation Councils, the Indigenist Policy Committees and the Sub-Committee of the Commission for the Study and Reform of Mining Legislation.

13. Similarly, the Ministry of Agriculture issued Decree No. 2001 of 28 September 1988 establishing the "cabildos indígenas" (indigenous municipal councils) described as "public entities of a special character" and assigned with the task of governing the indigenous inhabitants and administering their territories. The indigenous population's powers of self-government were also made stronger in regard to the selection, formulation, implementation, control and direct management of small community projects.

14. As a concrete example of political participation by indigenous inhabitants not only at the regional but also at the national level, particular stress should be placed on the participation of two candidates for the National Constituent Assembly, namely Lorenzo Muelas Hurtado and Francisco Rojas Birry. They obtained enough votes to be elected to the Assembly, which, during the first half of 1991, will be called on to adopt amendments to the Colombian Constitution. These indigenous representatives will participate in major decisions to strengthen the fundamental principles that will guide the country in the future.

15. The Government's basic premise has been implementation of the rules on the protection of the indigenous communities and safeguarding their rights on terms of equality with the other nationals, while preventing racial discrimination and punishing those who perform acts of discrimination.

16. With the aim of guaranteeing equal treatment before the law, courses on indigenous legislation have been organized in the various communities; that task was carried out by the Ministry of the Interior's Division of Indigenous Affairs, which provided legal assistance for the preservation of traditional values, community rights, territorial development, renewal of the cabildos and studies on the establishment of foundations, corporations and other legal entities. In particular, steps were taken to prevent violation of the human rights of the indigenous inhabitants in areas of armed confrontation with the guerrillas and, in addition, to implement the law which exempts indigenous inhabitants from military service.

17. In recent years, there have been training programmes to acquaint public bodies with indigenous legislation and to make sure that they respect the cultural values of the communities and that public officials, regardless of their status or post, apply the provisions which protect the rights of those communities. In addition, "Amerindian Thought" and "Human Rights" are programmes broadcast on the radio every Saturday. Furthermore, pamphlets on indigenous legislation have been prepared under the National Rehabilitation Plan as well as a book on the Colombian Government's policy for the defence of indigenous rights and the conservation of the Amazon Basin.

18. Moreover, to promote the welfare of the indigenous peoples and provide them with a stable economy, the Government has supported indigenous initiatives for suitable development of their lands. These programmes have been formulated with due regard for the traditional economic bases of the communities; emphasis has been laid on producing more small surpluses for trading purposes and on guaranteeing basic services and improving infrastructure.

19. Major steps have been taken in farming. In this connection, programmes have related to raising cattle, sheep, and pigs and animal breeding, sugar mills, fish farms, crop improvement and diversification, marketing and low-interest loans.

20. According to the reports of the National Planning Department, in the period August 1986 to May 1990, the Government invested the sum of 21,444,126,000 Colombian pesos.

21. Protection of the right to health of the indigenous inhabitants has been strengthened by providing free medical assistance in accord with the traditional medicine of the various ethnic groups. Steps were taken to implement Resolution No. 10013 of 1981, issued by the Ministry of Health and specifying that health services must be provided with due regard for the cultural characteristics of each community and that both the supply of drugs and medical care for indigenous inhabitants must be free of charge.

22. The right to education is guaranteed by legislative measures, more particularly in recent years by Decree No. 1142 of 1978, which recognizes ethnic pluralism and sets out the right of the indigenous communities to receive education in keeping with their social, cultural and economic characteristics. The main purpose of the entire educational programme has been to enhance the social decision-making capacity of the indigenous inhabitants with regard to their own future, as an essential factor in the exercise of political rights and self-determination.

23. Decree No. 2230 of 1986 set up the National Aboriginal Linguistics Committee, under the Colombian Institute of Anthropology (ICAN), to advise the Government in the formulation of policies for research, dissemination, protection, teaching, the training of experts in ethnolinguistics and the preservation of the Amerindian languages spoken in Colombian territory.

24. To facilitate access by indigenous inhabitants to higher education, bearing in mind that one of the main problems of the indigenous student population on completing secondary education is lack of money to enter university, the National University of Colombia has taken a decision to ensure that 2 per cent of its available places will be set aside for indigenous candidates. Moreover, the "Alvaro Ulcué" Fellowship Fund has been set up, and the finances are managed by the Colombian Institute for Educational Credits and Technical Studies Abroad (ICETEX); the purpose of the Fund is to support indigenous students in their pre-university and pre-graduate studies.

25. The Colombian Government considers that the policy for the protection of the rights of the indigenous peoples cannot be separated from the measures taken for the conservation and preservation of the Earth's environment. In less than two centuries, the industrialized countries have wiped out the fauna and the forests of Europe and North America and have nearly caused the extinction of the indigenous population and the autochthonous races. Uncontrolled development is obviously a threat to the whole of mankind,

leading, as it does, to indiscriminate exploitation of non-renewable natural resources, destruction of the ozone layer, pollution of the seas and the air, acid rain, climate changes, and nuclear tests and disasters.

26. Accordingly, the Amazon region is vital, not only for the welfare of the indigenous communities that live there, but also for the conservation and preservation of the world's environment. Mindful of that fact, Colombia has decided to conserve the ecosystems and to respect the rights of the indigenous inhabitants of the Amazon region. As a result, areas for special management have been created and recognition has been given to the rights of the indigenous inhabitants to ownership of the land, use of natural resources, social and cultural self-determination and full participation in taking decisions that affect them.

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REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENTS PERTAINING TO THE PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS OF INDIGENOUS POPULATION

Information received from non-governmental organizations

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INTRODUCTION

1. By its resolution 1982/34 of 7 May 1982, the Economic and Social Council authorized the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities to establish annually a working group on indigenous populations to review developments pertaining to the promotion and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous populations, including information requested by the Secretary-General annually, and to give special attention to the evolution of standards concerning the rights of indigenous populations.

2. The Sub-Commission, in its resolution 1990/26, requested the Secretary-General to transmit the report of the Working Group to indigenous peoples' and non-governmental organizations. The Commission on Human Rights made the same request in its resolution 1991/59 of 6 March 1991. In accordance with these resolutions, appropriate communications were sent to the above-mentioned organizations on 10 December 1990.

3. The present document contains replies received as of 4 June 1991 from indigenous and non-governmental organizations pertaining to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous populations. Further replies, if any, will be included in addenda to this document.

I. INFORMATION SUBMITTED BY NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

A. International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs

Human rights in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh

4. On 23 May 1991, the Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission investigating the human rights situation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh, released its final report at the House of Lords in London. The report, entitled "Life is not Ours", provides a detailed account of what is happening in the Hill Tracts and contains hitherto unpublished information on the situation.

5. The Commission is chaired by Wilfried Telkämper, Vice-President of the European Parliament and Douglas Sanders, a professor of law from Canada. The other members of the Commission are Hans Pavia Rosing, member of the Danish Parliament from Greenland, Rose Murray, Aboriginal representative from Australia and Leif Dunfjeld, a Sami lawyer from Norway.

6. In December 1990, the Commission travelled throughout the Chittagong Hill Tracts and visited the refugee camps in Tripura, India. This was the first time that the Bangladesh authorities had allowed anyone unlimited and free access to all parts of the Hill Tracts, which is the homeland of twelve hill tribes numbering about 600,000 people. It is situated at the south-eastern corner of Bangladesh wedged between the Indian states of Tripura and Mizoram.

7. The hill people differ markedly from the Muslim Bengali majority of Bangladesh. The largest groups, the Chakma and Marma, are Buddhist, the Tripura people are Hindu while the smaller tribal peoples such as the Pankhua, Bawm and Mru are Christian. They practise a mixed farming of plough cultivation in the fertile valleys and swidden [cut and burn] agriculture on the hill slopes, known as jhum cultivation.

8. Between 1957 and 1963 the Government built a massive hydroelectric dam at Kaptai which flooded 54,000 acres of ploughland and took 40 per cent of the terrain available for cultivation from the tribal farmers. A total of 100,000 hill people were affected, few received any compensation and thousands fled to India, 40,000 to 60,000 of them remain in Arunachal Pradesh to this day, stateless.

9. Between 1979 and 1983 a Government transmigration policy brought 400,000 settlers into the Hills to areas where there was no land for them. Not only had the people lost 40 per cent of their land, but they were now squeezed out of what little had been left to them.

10. A guerrilla movement of the hill people, known as the Shanti Bahine, took to arms against the Bangladesh army and the settlers. The military has carried out counter-insurgency activities, and for over 10 years accounts of massive human rights violations have emerged from the area with questions raised at the United Nations and the International Labour Organisation.

11. In 1989 the Bangladesh Government brought in a new District Council law, claiming that councils led by predominantly tribal people would bring autonomy

to he Hill Tracts. However, the very limited power of the Councils and their establishment by force has greatly discredited their claim as autonomous bodies.

12. The following are the conclusions contained in the Commission's report:

1. Although multi-party democracy has returned to Bangladesh, the Chittagong Hill Tracts are under military control.

2. There have been massive violations of human rights of the hill people in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

3. In spite of repeated military and governmental statements that violations of human rights will not continue, attacks by military and Bengali settlers continue.

4. People lie in order to function in the oppressive situation in which they find themselves.

5. The settlement of Bengalis from other parts of Bangladesh has led to massive violations of property rights of hill people.

6. There is a massive and largely involuntary reorganization of both hill people and Bengali occurring in the Chittagong Hill Tracts into "cluster villages".

7. There is a constant denigration of the economic, social and cultural characteristics of the hill people by Government, military and settlers.

8. There are very serious threats to the ecology taking place in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

9. There have been serious problems with the process of developing the new system of District Councils in the area.

13. The following are the recommendations of the Commission:

1. <u>Land issues and the presence of the Bengali settlers</u>

(a) No further settlement in the Chittagong Hill Tracts by outside settlers should be permitted. Voluntary relocation should be discussed in the context of foreign aid support;

(b) The cluster villages should be dismantled immediately;

(c) A neutral investigation of title to land and of illegally occupied land should take place;

(d) An assessment of the carrying capacity of land in the Hill Tracts should be undertaken;

(e) The law should recognize the authority of Government in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

2. Autonomy

(a) The Chittagong Hill Tracts must be demilitarized;

(b) Autonomous political institutions, stronger than the now existing District Councils, should be established;

(c) There should be a referendum in the Chittagong Hill Tracts on autonomy with the voting confined to hill people;

(d) Present District Council laws should be repealed or amended. There should also be constitutional protection of any future autonomous Government.

3. Human rights violations

The report of the Commission clearly documents massive human rights violations in the Chittagong Hill Tracts which constitute a genocidal process. Hill people have been murdered, crippled, raped, tortured, imprisoned and deprived of their homes and means of livelihood. They have been denied civil and political rights. They have been denied economic, social and cultural rights. There has been extensive and massive illegality in land matters under Bangladesh law. The Commission recommends a continuing monitoring body to continually monitor human rights in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. As Special Rapporteur of the United Nations should be named by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights supplemented by continuing investigations by the ILO and competent NGOs.

B. Socialist International Women

Resolution on indigenous peoples and the Americas adopted in New York on 5/6 October 1990

14. No discussion of global poverty can be complete without examining the plight of indigenous peoples around the world. In country after country, whether in the industrialized North or the developing South, it is the indigenous people of those lands that suffer most. On them a double burden of poverty falls. Globally, we see a trail of unresolved land claims and entitlements, destruction of culture and language, displacement and abject poverty especially for children, whether their country is rich or poor.

15. Canada is a case in point. This summer Canada faced a major crisis with their own native peoples. The blockade at Oka, Quebec to save a piece of sacred land has only focused attention on the problems for indigenous peoples, it has not even begun to solve them. Words will not work anymore - now there can only be action to begin to address aboriginal concerns.

16. In the United States, the federal Government has a long history of broken treaties with native Americans. Native lands, even sacred lands, have been appropriated by private industry and Government for use in mining, manufacturing and waste disposal. Inadequate services have resulted in high infant mortality rates, shortened life spans, high unemployment and extreme impoverishment in native American communities.

17. Another example worth mentioning are Latin American indigenous ethnias who suffer the worst injustices nd exploitation, being constantly denied the most elementary of human rights.

18. There are many countries with a similar history. As we approach 1992, we will be commemorating the five hundredth anniversary of Columbus' voyage to America. There are many different perspectives on this commemoration since some indigenous peoples are still, after 500 years, the victims of dislocation, disease, poverty, suffering the destruction of their lands used as toxic waste dumps and the destruction of rain forests.

19. Socialist International Women calls on all member parties to ensure that indigenous peoples are able to tell their story and tragedy by providing equal funding and support to these groups during the 1992 commemorations. We call on Governments around the world to take action on the outstanding issues of land claim settlements, human rights, political rights and personal safety of indigenous peoples. We call on our member parties ... to become advocates for these issues. Socialist International Women urges the United Nations to focus attention on the plight of indigenous peoples in 1992.

20. Now we must act in solidarity. As an organization that values human rights as one of the basics of our movement, we call on each member to support morally and financially the indigenous peoples in their struggle to tell their story of 500 years of oppression and to work for justice for indigenous peoples and ensure a cultural, social and economic future.

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Note by the Secretary-General

Information submitted by The Movement Tupaj Katari

Considering that the "discovery of the New World" by the Spanish conquistadors, that is, the brutal invasion of the Americas 500 years ago, marked the beginning of a period that is without doubt the darkest and most barbarian in the annals of indigenous peoples of the western hemisphere,

Considering that from the beginning of that fateful day (12 October 1492) that historians qualify as an accident of history, the conquest erected by force a colonial system on the American continent and caused the brutal destruction of the aboriginal civilizations (Inca, Maya, Aztec, etc.), the annihilation of their thousand-year-old cultures and ancient traditions, the extermination of entire populations, the genocide pure and simple, the torture, servitude, enslavement and daily negation of their values,

Convinced that, contrary to the falsified version of history by the colonizers, it is more important than ever to re-establish the historical truth that the question is not one of discovery or of an encounter, but rather of a confrontation of two worlds: that of the oppressor and that of the oppressed, the shock of two cultures and two irreconcilable civilizations, of two conflicting visions of the universe, of two systems of contradictory values - the Indian being collectivist, communal, humane, fraternal, peaceful, respectful of Mother Earth and in harmony with the Universe; the European being greedy, individualistic, ambitious, wager of war and destroyer of nature in order to satisfy the thirst for power and profit,

Paying hommage to the memory of some 90 million Indians who were exterminated, massacred, burned alive, to the survivors who were enslaved yesterday and live in misery today,

Considering that all that we have described truly constitutes a crime against humanity,

Deploring the preparations being made and the means employed by Western Governments, particularly by that of Spain, for the festive celebrations of the so-called "encounter of two worlds", or the "discovery", which we consider as an insult to the dignity of the indigenous peoples and a humiliation to those who have survived the colonial hecatomb,

Recalling that the States and Governments have a moral duty to reflect upon this human tragedy and crime perpetrated against civilized and peaceful peoples,

Recognizing that the vitality and the force of resistance and the struggle of the indigenous peoples is rooted in their national identity, motor of their own history, and in the constant valorization of the diversity of their cultural and linguistic expression, as well as their social structures, legal institutions and their philosophy, all of which are an integral part of human patrimony,

Reaffirming the necessity to apply the rights and fundamental freedoms as stipulated in the draft universal declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, in particular the right to live in dignity, the right to land, to peace, to work and the right to self-determination of indigenous peoples and nations,

Conscious that nowhere will there be justice and peace as long as Indians, peasants deprived of their Mother Earth, surviving in misery and poverty, working in unworthy conditions, suffering racial discrimination and held in contempt, humiliated, a shame for Western civilization and a source of permanent conflict for the world,

WE, REPRESENTING INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS, HAVE DECIDED TO:

Solemnly proclaim 1992 the International Year of Resistance and Struggle of the indigenous peoples for their rights, their dignity and their fundamental freedoms, with the symbolic date of 12 October 1991;

Demand that the Spanish Government as well as those of all Western colonial nations assume the moral and political responsibility for the reparation of the negative consequences of the invasion: the genocide, crimes, pillage of gold and silver, and pay indemnity to the descendants of the aggressed peoples of the Americas in conformity with the provisions foreseen by international law;

Ask the international community to accept the participation of representatives of indigenous peoples and nations as observers at all sessions of the United Nations General Assembly.

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Information received from United Nations organs, specialized agencies and intergovernmental organizations

Note by the International Labour Office

GE.91-12362/6624a

Activities of the ILO concerning indigenous and tribal peoples since the last session of the Working Group

1. ILO activity in this field falls into three broad categories: supervision of the implementation of the Indigenous and Tribal Populations Convention, 1957 (No. 107); promotion of the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169); and technical cooperation activities.

I. Supervision of Convention No. 107

2. Reports were due on 15 October 1990, in the four-year reporting cycle, from all the 27 countries which had ratified Convention No. 107, in order to be submitted to the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations at its session in March 1991. The Committee of Experts made observations (comments published in its report) to the Governments of Argentina, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Brazil, Costa Rica, India, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay and Peru. It also made direct requests (which are not published) to Angola, Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, India, Iraq, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and the Syrian Arab Republic on the application of the Convention. Subsequently, the application of the Convention by Brazil and India was discussed in the Committee on the Application of Standards of the International Labour Conference at its 78th Session (June 1991); reports of these discussions are also attached.

3. It may be expected that some of the cases mentioned above will be discussed again next year, when the information requested has arrived and been examined.

4. Attention should be drawn to two of the countries mentioned here.

5. Brazil has been the object of discussions for some time, in particular in connection with the situation of the Yanomami Indians in the north of the country and the invasion of their territory by garimpeiros (independent gold miners), and with the demarcation of land for an indigenous Reserve. Questions have also been raised about the administration of Indian affairs more generally. An ILO mission visited the country in 1989. It will be seen from the observation that a significant re-examination of the situation has been taking place, and the ILO has been discussing with the Government the possibility of providing technical assistance to help resolve the problems which persist. At the Conference discussion in June 1991, the Government indicated its willingness to request such assistance, and further discussions are under way within the context of the system-wide assistance to be provided following the Secretary-General's letter of February 1991. The Working Group will be kept informed of further developments.

6. India has also been discussed in the Committee of Experts and the Conference Committee on a number of occasions, in relation in particular to the construction of the Narmada Valley hydroelectric system and the consequent displacement of some 60,000 tribal people from their homes. The Committee of Experts noted in 1991 that the Government's continuing efforts to resolve the problems arising in this connection were evident, but that its success in

doing so was less evident. The discussion which took place in the Conference Committee in June 1991 referred to all these points, and highlighted the role of the World Bank as a financing institution in this connection.

II. Promotion of Convention No. 169

7. Since the Working Group's last session, the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention has received its second ratification, by Mexico, and will therefore come into force on 5 September 1991 (one year after the second ratification). Ratification has been authorized by Colombia, and the Office is aware of other countries in which ratification is being examined.

8. The Office has undertaken a number of consultations with Governments and with non-governmental organizations on the scope and implications of Convention No. 169. Workshops have recently been carried out in Mexico and Colombia to assist the Governments to prepare for the Convention's coming into force for their countries; and in Guatemala and Venezuela, involving participants from different ministries responsible for the application of the Convention, as well as representatives of indigenous organizations and some other non-governmental organizations working on this question. The Working Group will be kept informed of further developments.

III. Technical assistance

9. The International Labour Conference adopted, at the same time that it adopted Convention No. 169 in 1989, a Resolution on ILO Action concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples. This resolution called upon the ILO to exercise a coordinating role as concerning technical assistance in this area among intergovernmental organizations.

10. In May 1990, as the Working Group was informed last year, the ILO invited a number of other bodies of the United Nations system to an interagency technical consultation on the technical assistance carried out by them in connection with indigenous and tribal peoples. One of the points emerging from this consultation was that, while there is considerable activity by the United Nations system affecting these peoples, there is no coordinated approach within the United Nations system - and certainly not beyond it - to the definitions, criteria, working methods and approaches to be used when financing and carrying out projects affecting these peoples.

11. A similar consultation on a regional basis was called by the ILO in Bangkok in December 1990, and it also met with a very positive response. In addition to the educational function which was so important a part of the first general interagency consultation, the first regional consultation allowed the participants to explore practical programmes of cooperation among themselves, and possible new projects and assistance offered jointly, that none of the agencies would have conceived alone. This meeting will require follow-up, and the ILO has been asked to continue in its coordinating role.

12. The ILO hopes to call a regional consultation of the same kind in Latin America in October 1991, and has already invited other United Nations system agencies to a second general consultation in Geneva in

November-December 1991, where it is proposed to discuss access to land rights and coordinated responses to the International Year proclaimed for 1993.

13. The absence of systematic coordination in this area should be seen also in the light of the heightened attention being given to the subject by a number of institutions both inside and outside the United Nations system. A number of institutions are concentrating their attention more closely on indigenous and tribal peoples, as are a number of Governments. One cause for this may be seen in the increased attention being given to environmental affairs, and to the role of these peoples in protecting and sustaining the environments within which they live. The criteria applied in conceiving and implementing the development projects carried out by different agencies, however, share few points in common when they affect indigenous and tribal peoples. They do not use the same definitions, working methods or basic concepts. This point is not limited to technical cooperation projects affecting indigenous and tribal peoples, of course; it extends also to differences in definitions, approaches and concepts underlying standard-setting, supervisory and promotional activities.

14. It may be that the discussions in the Working Group and in the Sub-Commission concerning planning for the International Year of the World's Indigenous People will allow these points to be addressed more fully.